

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 02579 311201Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 2579

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, UK, BX, MY

SUBJ: VISIT OF LORD GORONWY-ROBERTS: BRUNEI

REF : KUALA LUMPUR 2577

1. DONALD MURRAY, FCO ASSISTANT UNDER SECRETARY ACCOMPANYING LORD GORONWY-ROBERTS, DEBRIEFED ME ON THE LATTER'S VISIT TO MALAYSIA MARCH 22-24. HE SAID THE VISIT TOOK PLACE FOR TWO REASONS: A) TO MOVE THE CONCORDE ISSUE FORWARD (REPORTED SEPARATELY); AND B) TO DISCUSS BRUNEI (SEE BELOW).

2. ACCORDING TO MURRAY, THE U.K. IS ESSENTIALLY TRYING TO GET THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER TO REALIZE THAT BRUNEI'S RELATIONS WITH THE U.K. IS AN ANACHRONISM IN TODAY'S WORLD, AND THAT THEY DO NOT PROVIDE BRUNEI WITH THE SECURITY IT SEEKS. MURRAY ALSO INDICATED THAT THERE WERE SIDE ISSUES INVOLVED AS WELL: A) A POINT OF IRRITATION WITH THE U.K. FOR MANY YEARS HAS BEEN THE GOM'S ANNUAL SPONSORSHIP IN THE UN OF A RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE U.K. AS BRUNEI'S ADMINISTERING POWER TO BRING BRUNEI TO SELF-DETERMINATION. B) UNDER ITS PAST DEFENSE REVIEWS, LEADING TO REDUCTIONS IN DEFENSE EXPENDITURES, THE U.K. DECIDED
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 KUALA 02579 311201Z

IN 1974 TO REMOVE THE GURKHA BATTALION FROM BRUNEI, SINCE IT HAS NO INTERNAL SECURITY DUTIES AND NO COMMITMENTS REGARDING EXTERNAL DEFENSE, EXCEP "CONSULTATIONZM

3. THE U.K. WANTS TO WITHDRAW ITS GURKHAS WITH BRUNEI'S AGREEMENT AND NOT UNILATERALLY IN ORDER TO PRESERVE STABILITY. HOWEVER, SINCE 1974, THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER HAVE SIMPLY

STALLED AND REFUSED TO GIVE AGREEMENT TO BRITISH PLANS. LAST YEAR THE U.K. TOLD THE SULTAN THAT THE PRESENT U.K.-BRUNEI LINK COULD NOT BE CONTINUED, AND THAT BRUNEI WOULD GET MUCH BETTER PROTECTION BY INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IF IT WERE SEEN TO BE INDEPENDENT. IF BRUNEI BECAME FULLY INDEPENDENT, AND QUICKLY, THIS WOULD REALLY CHANGE THE "BALANCE OF POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS" AND THE U.K. WOULD BE PREPARED TO LEAVE THE GURKHAS FOR FIVE YEARS (FIVE YEARS BEING THE LONGEST PRACTICABLE PLANNING PERIOD). MURRAY INDICATED THAT BOTH THE GOM AND THE USG HAD BEEN KEPT INFORMED ON ALL THIS.

4. THE U.K. HAD REVIEWED THESE ARGUMENTS WITH THE SULTAN'S FATHER IN LONDON LAST YEAR BUT MADE NO PROGRESS. OVER THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS THE SULTAN WROTE THE QUEEN CHARGING THAT THE U.K. WAS NOT LIVING UP TO ITS AGE-OLD SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP WITH BRUNEI. MURRAY SAID THAT THE QUEEN HAS NOW REPLIED TO THE SULTAN. IN HER REPLY SHE HAS INDICATED THAT SHE TAKES THE ADVICE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT. SHE POINTS OUT THAT BRUNEI HAS BEEN OFFERED A "GOOD DEAL" AND THAT SHE HOPES IT WILL START SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS. AFTER RECEIVING INDICATIONS INFORMALLY OF THE SULTAN'S NEGATIVE REACTION TO THE QUEEN'S REPLY, MURRAY VISITED BRUNEI THE WEEK BEFORE LAST (JUST BEFORE DCM'S VISIT - SEE REFTEL), IN ORDER TO IMPRESS UPON THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER THE NECESSITY FOR MOVING FORWARD. IN HIS DISCUSSIONS IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER DO NOT TRUST THE MALAYSIANS, AND THAT THEREFORE THEY DO NOT WISH TO BE INDEPENDENT. THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KUALA 02579 311201Z

INDICATED THAT BRUNEI COULD NOT STAND ON ITS OWN FEET FOR FIVE TO EIGHT YEARS. MURRAY'S ANSWER WAS THAT BRUNEI WOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE THE U.K.'S HELP. THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT WHEN MALAYSIA SEES THAT BRUNEI IS FULLY INDEPENDENT, IT WILL HAVE DESIGNS ON BRUNEI, ENCOURAGE THE BRUNEI PEOPLES PARTY, ETC.

5. MURRAY INDICATED TO ME IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE THAT LORD GORONWY-ROBERTS HAD DISCUSSED BRUNEI WITH MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN. MURRAY CLAIMED THAT HUSSEIN AGREED WITH THE BRITISH THAT THE PROBLEM WAS HOW TO CONVINCE THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER THAT BOTH THE U.K. AND MALAYSIA WANTED FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH BRUNEI. THE U.K. RECOGNIZED THAT THERE IS LITTLE THAT MALAYSIA CAN DO TO PERSUADE BRUNEI OF ITS GOOD INTENTIONS. BUT EQUALLY, MURRAY SAID, HUSSEIN HINTED THAT MALAYSIA WOULD HAVE A PROBLEM IF BRUNEI'S STATUS CHANGED AND, FOR EXAMPLE, IT WISHED TO JOIN THE UN. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES MALAYSIA WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT BRUNEI'S UN MEMBERSHIP, BUT MALAYSIA IS STUCK WITH ITS ANNUAL RESOLUTION CALLING FOR SELF-DETERMINATION, INCLUDING INTERNAL REFORM OF THE SULTAN'S AUTOCRATIC REGIME. THUS, IF THE U.K. MOVES ON BRUNEI, IT PRODUCES A DILEMMA FOR MALAYSIA AND RAISES MALAYSIAN CONCERNS THAT A CHANGE IN BRUNEI'S

STATUS MIGHT UNDERMINE BRUNEI'S (AND MALAYSIA'S) SECURITY.

6. MURRAY CONCLUDED HIS COMMENTS BY SAYING THAT IN EFFECT HE HAD GONE TO BRUNEI TO TELL THE SULTAN AND HIS FATHER THEY HAD TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS SOON -- WITHIN WEEKS OR THE U.K. WOULD HAVE TO MOVE UNILATERALLY. THE U.K. WAS NOT SAYING TO BRUNEI HOW LONG THESE NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD TAKE, OR WHEN AGREEMENT SHOULD BE REACHED, BUT THAT NEGOTIATIONS MUST GET UNDERWAY PROMPTLY.

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